

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

ACDA-19 IO-14 EB-11 MC-02 AF-10 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01

SCEM-02 SCI-06 INT-08 DRC-01 /172 W

----- 127589

O R 171149Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4860

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS ZXIEW

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

EUCOM

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 12037

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY DEFENDS

UK ARMS EMBARGO

REF: LONDON'S 12025

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1. SUMMARY: DESPITE SHARP CRITICISM FROM OPPOSITION LEADERS AND OTHERS, BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY TENACIOUSLY DEFENDED UK ARMS EMBARGO TO MIDDLE EAST BEFORE COMMONS OCTOBER 16. HE PROMISED TO KEEP DECISION UNDER REVIEW BUT INSISTED IT WAS EVEN-HANDED.
END SUMMARY

2. HOUSE OF COMMONS REASSEMBLED OCTOBER 16 AFTER SUMMER RECESS AND HEARD BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY DELIVER STATEMENT DEFENDING UK ARMS EMBARGO TO MIDDLE EAST. SIR ALEC SAID IT WOULD HAVE BEEN "INCONSISTENT" FOR UK TO CALL FOR CEASEFIRE AND YET TO CONTINUE SHIPMENT OF ARMS. IN CONTRAST TO 1967 WHEN AN ARMS EMBARGO WOULD HAVE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST ISRAEL, HE ASSERTED THAT IT WAS NOW "EVEN-HANDED."

3. LABOR LEADER HAROLD WILSON, SHADOW FOREIGN SECRETARY, JIM CALLAGHAN, LIBERAL LEADER JEREMY THORPE, AS WELL AS VARIOUS BACKBENCHERS, ALL QUESTIONED WHETHER EMBARGO WAS IN FACT EVEN-HANDED AND PRESSED SIR ALEC TO RECONSIDER AT LEAST THE SUPPLY OF AMMUNITION AND SPARE PARTS TO CENTURION TANKS. SIR ALEC STUCK TO HIS POSITION TENACIOUSLY BUT AGREED TO KEEP POLICY UNDER REVIEW.

4. SIR ALEC ALSO STATED THAT BRITISH MILITARY FACILITIES OVERSEAS HAD NOT BEEN AND WERE NOT BEING USED FOR THE TRANSIT OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THE BATTLEFIELD. (HE DID NOT MENTION MILITARY FACILITIES IN THE UK AND WAS NOT QUESTIONED ON THIS POINT.)

5. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM CALLAGHAN, SIR ALEC ASSURED THE HOUSE THERE HAD BEEN NO ARAB THREATS TO CUT OFF OIL SUPPLIES AND THAT IF SUCH THREATS WERE MADE HMG WOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED.

6. SIR ALEC ALSO DEFENDED THE TRAINING OF EGYPTIAN HELICOPTER PILOTS IN UK (HELICOPTERS FOR WHICH THEY ARE BEING TRAINED FALL UNDER ARMS EMBARGO), AND SHIPMENT OF TANKS TO DUBAI (THE SECURITY OF THE GULF
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IS A VITAL BRITISH INTEREST AND TANKS ARE LIGHT RECONNAISSANCE TANKS WITH LIGHT ARMS WHICH WOULD HAVE NO SIGNIFICANCE IN PRESENT CONFLICT EVEN IF THEY

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 ACDA-19 IO-14 CCO-00

EB-11 MC-02 AF-10 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SCEM-02

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O R 171149Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4861

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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WERE TO BECOME ENGAGED).

7. SIR ALEC JUSTIFIED BRITISH POLICY HITHERTO OF
SELLING ARMS TO ISRAEL, JORDAN, AND EGYPT AS AN
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ATTEMPT TO GIVE THESE COUNTRIES SUFFICIENT SECURITY SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TO RESORT TO ATTACKS UPON ONE ANOTHER. HE CONCEDED THAT THIS POLICY HAD FAILED.

8. LOOKING TO ULTIMATE SETTLEMENT, SIR ALEC REITERATED THAT RESOLUTION 242 STILL OFFERS BEST CHANCE AND ADDED THAT INGREDIENTS OF SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE ACTION BY UN SECRETARY GENERAL, INTRODUCTION OF AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE FORCE, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMILITARIZED ZONES.

9. SIR ALEC'S STATEMENT AND HIS REPLIES TO QUESTIONS WERE DELIVERED IN LOW-KEY, SOBER VEIN. HE FREELY ADMITTED THAT DECISION HAD BEEN DIFFICULT AND THAT NO ONE COULD BE ABSOLUTELY SURE IT WAS CORRECT, BUT FOR PRESENT AT LEAST HE WAS CONVINCED IT WAS THE RIGHT COURSE FOR BRITAIN TO FOLLOW. ISRAELI SUPPORTERS UNFURLED ISRAELI FLAG IN SPECTATORS' GALLERY WHILE SIR ALEC SPOKE AND TRIED TO THROW IT ONTO FLOOR OF COMMONS, BUT THEY WERE QUICKLY AND QUIETLY REMOVED. FULL-SCALE EMERGENCY DEBATE ON MIDDLE EAST HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW.

10. OPINION POLL CONDUCTED OCTOBER 13 AND PUBLISHED YESTERDAY SHOWS POPULAR SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL RUNNING AT 47.5 PERCENT COMPARED TO ONLY 5 PERCENT FOR ARABS.

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